Skills *Nova Scotia*

Strong Workforce Bright Future

Working Paper
June 2002

NOVA SCOTIA

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NOVA SCOTIA
Department of Education

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The government invites written comments and/or submissions on the development of this working paper. Deadline for submission is September 12, 2002.

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Introduction

Nova Scotia is a leader in job creation and gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the country, and our future outlook is positive. Managing this growth is a challenge for business, labour, communities, individuals, and the government. Other challenges, including a growing energy sector, an aging workforce, advancing technology, and globalization, have created an impetus to develop and deliver labour market initiatives that reflect the changing economy and position the province to take full advantage of existing and future opportunities.

An effective labour market framework consists of the activities and services that meet the demand for a variety of skills and knowledge, as well as the ability to supply them when needed. Because employment growth is important to the economic and social development of the province, the elements of the labour market and the extent to which they work well together are critical.

The Skills Nova Scotia Framework is intended to build on the strengths of existing programs, services, and our economic potential through effective co-ordination, strategic partnerships, and innovative solutions. Identified goals are expected to move the province toward a world-class workforce ready to meet the demands of today and the promise of tomorrow. This document contains the Government of Nova Scotia's strategic framework that addresses the skill needs of the labour market. It presents feedback from a number of consultation reports, identifies key elements of a skills framework, and provides a strategy for action. The framework is intended to encompass skills and learning from the ABCs to PhDs and is, in effect, a catalyst, designed to encourage the development of a skilled, knowledgeable, and responsive labour force.

What Skills Are and Why They Are Important

The skills, attributes, and knowledge required to perform most occupations in the 21st century are constantly evolving. The proliferation of technology, new knowledge, and innovation in the workplace has changed the skill and knowledge combinations required for traditional occupations and led to the creation of new ones with new combinations. For instance, today's mechanized forestry and milling operations require individuals with the essential, technical, and management skills to perform everyday job tasks that comply with certification and regulatory standards. Doctors, teachers, and engineers are also seeing their workplaces transformed by information technology.

The development of skills and knowledge is important for individual Nova Scotians because

- Most new jobs require high levels of skill and knowledge and requirements are changing rapidly. In order to thrive in this new economic climate, people must have the flexibility and ability to continually develop their skills and knowledge.
- Higher education and literacy levels of people in the labour force are linked to longer periods of sustained employment, higher levels of productivity and higher levels of per capita income.
- Better-educated people tend to be healthier and live longer and are more likely to participate in civic and community affairs.

Types of Skills

For the purposes of this framework, we will define a **skill** as the ability to perform a task competently and an **occupation** as a combination of professional or technical skills and knowledge needed to perform a particular type of work. Borrowing from the Expert Panel on Skills, we will categorize skills as essential, technical, contextual, managerial, and leadership. Each set describes categories of skills that are important to the performance of any job.

Essential skills are reading text, document use, writing, math, thinking skills, learning independently, adapting to situations, exercising responsibility, analysing and solving problems, oral communications, working with others, and computer use. They are considered foundational to formal education, work-based training, and workforce participation.

Technical skills (or professional skills) refer to the ability to perform specialized tasks that may be particular to a single occupation or industry or cross a range of industries.

Contextual skills refer to the ability to operate successfully in different settings, such as in different countries, different regions, or a culturally diverse workplace. Each organization and industry sector operates within its own context, and some may operate in several contexts. Each context requires different skill sets.

Managerial skills refer to the ability to undertake organizational activities such as planning, marketing, and evaluation. They also include the ability to manage people, capital, budgets, and so on.

Leadership skills refer to the ability to motivate and assist others to achieve their full potential, to take risks, and to formulate and champion a vision.

Stepping Up: Skills and Opportunities in the Knowledge Economy, 2000

The development of skills and knowledge of a labour force are important to the economy because

- Investment in skills and investment in capital and research and development directly affect Nova Scotians and are two important factors in productivity growth.
- Skills development leads to lower costs, higher product reliability, more innovation, and more efficient product design cycles.
- Good education and foundational skills are essential to full participation in a democratic society.

Why a Skills Nova Scotia Framework Is Needed

Nova Scotia has many strengths to build upon in addition to its positive economic outlook:

- Nova Scotia has a highly educated labour force. Approximately 60 percent of Nova Scotians between the ages of 25 and 54 were either college, trade, or university graduates. (*Labour Force Historical Review 2001*)
- Nova Scotia has a high participation rate in education and training. In 1998–99, 42.3 percent of Nova Scotians aged 18 to 24 were enrolled in a full-time post-secondary program, as compared to 34.4 percent nationally. In 1997, 27.6 percent of Nova Scotians aged 16 or over, who were not attending an educational institution on a full-time basis, participated in some form of adult education, compared to 26.3 percent nationally. (*Education in Canada: 2000*, May 2001)
- Nova Scotia has the means to provide state-of-the-art education and training. The province is home to 11 universities, two community colleges with a combined 18 campuses/learning centres, and 53 private career colleges.
- Nova Scotia offers a low cost of living. In 1999, a comparative study found that Halifax, Sydney, and Antigonish offered lower costs of living than Boston, Vancouver, Raleigh, and Ottawa for families of four with a $40,000 income and lower costs of living for all those cities except Raleigh for families of four with a $90,000 income. (*Nova Scotia's Knowledge Economy Report Card 1999*)
- Nova Scotia has a high quality of life. In 1999, NovaKnowledge checked the top four key quality of life indicators as identified by North American business leaders, and they found that Nova Scotia had favourable ratings in all four indicators (competitive cost of living, quality health care, good schools, and low crime rate) as compared to the rest of North America. (*Nova Scotia's Knowledge Economy Report Card 1999*)

However, despite these advantages, a number of labour force and education challenges hinder the development of a well-balanced, skilled, and knowledgeable labour force. They include the following.

Labour Force Challenges

- Nova Scotia's population is not increasing at a great pace, and it is aging. Statistics Canada's medium term demographic projections show that the average age of the population will increase from about 36.8 in 2000, to 40.1 in 2010 and 42.3 in 2020. The share of older workers (aged 45–64) in the working age population (those aged 15 to 64 years) will rise from about 34 percent in 2000 to 41 percent in 2010. (Statistics Canada, *Population Projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2000–2026*, March 2001)
- Most of Nova Scotia's future workforce is already in the labour market. In fact, more than half of Canada's 2015 workforce is already in the labour market. (*Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians*, 2002)

- There are already shortages of skilled labour. The Conference Board of Canada's study *What to Do Before the Well Runs Dry: Managing Scarce Skills* reported that "shortages were particularly acute in natural resources, construction, manufacturing, information technology, financial services, education, health care, arts and government." (2000)
- The Expert Panel on Skills indicated that "Canadian industry was most vulnerable to a shortage of individuals who combine management and essential skills and attributes with strong technical skills." (*Stepping Up: Skills and Opportunities in the Knowledge Economy*, 2000)
- Shortages could pose a challenge well into the early part of the 21st century. The Conference Board of Canada estimates that within 20 years there will be a national shortfall of almost 1 million workers. (*Performance and Potential, 2000–2001*)
- Future labour force growth in Canada will not be fuelled by natural population growth; by 2011 immigration will account for all the net labour force growth in Canada. (*Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians*, 2002)
- Nova Scotia has two or possibly even three labour markets. In 2001, the unemployment rate was 9.7 percent for Nova Scotia, while the unemployment rate in some locations was almost double the provincial rate (Cape Breton, 17.0 percent). In terms of rural versus urban unemployment, Halifax Regional Municipality had an unemployment rate of 7.1 percent, while the remainder of mainland Nova Scotia had 10.1 percent of its workforce unemployed. (Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Historical Review 2001*)
- The core of our economy is small, locally owned businesses. Thirty-nine percent of Nova Scotians work in businesses with fewer than 20 employees. (Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Historical Review 2001*)
- The level of education required to work at most jobs is increasing. By 2004, more than 70 percent of all new jobs created in Canada will require some form of post-secondary education, and 25 percent will require a university degree. Only 6 percent of new jobs will be held by those who have not finished high school. (*Job Futures [2000] World of Work: Overviews and Trends*)

Education Challenges

- A significant number of Nova Scotians do not possess a high school diploma. Approximately 22 percent of adult Nova Scotians between the ages of 25 and 54 had less than a high school diploma. (*Education Indicators in Canada: Report of the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program*, 1999)
- Many Nova Scotians have minimal literacy skills. Approximately 25 percent of Atlantic Canadians have great difficulty reading and have few of the essential literacy skills needed to understand and use written materials (Literacy Level 1). (*Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada*, 1996)
- An additional 27 percent of Atlantic Canadians have limited literacy and numeracy skills. They can read, but not very well. They can deal with written materials only if they are written simply and clearly laid out, and they may also have trouble with many everyday reading and writing tasks (Literacy Level 2). (*Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada*, 1996)

- Nova Scotia has an unusual distribution of those enrolled in post-secondary education. In 1998–99, 83 percent of students enrolled in post-secondary education were attending university, while only 17 percent were attending community college. In the country as a whole, 63 percent of post-secondary students were enrolled in university and 37 percent were enrolled in community college. (*Education in Canada: 2000*, May 2001)

Meeting the Challenges

Nova Scotia is doing much to meet the challenges leading to a well-balanced, skilled, and knowledgeable labour force.

- **Business is showing leadership.** For example, Dexter Construction (part of the Municipal Group) has partnered with the Nova Scotia Community College to create the Dexter Institute, an innovative program to address the skills shortage of human capital in heavy construction in Nova Scotia.
- **Adults are returning to learning.** For example, individuals are enrolling in the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, which supports the delivery of adult education from basic literacy to high school completion. Approximately 3,000 Nova Scotians are improving their skills and knowledge each year through programs offered by community-based organizations, school boards, the Nova Scotia Community College, and Collège de l'Acadie.
- **Government is partnering with business and labour.** For example, the province is supporting the delivery of essential skills education programs to over 1,000 employees at over 40 businesses each year. The delivery of this initiative is done in partnership with business and labour.
- **Educational institutions are working with business.** For example, the Nova Scotia Community College is partnering with EnCana, Ocean Rig 2 AS, Irving Oil to develop a new Offshore Operations Program to respond to the emerging labour market needs of Nova Scotia's offshore oil and gas industry.

  Nova Scotia's universities are engaged in research projects supported by Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) that will train graduate students and expose undergraduate students in skills that are in high demand in industry (Acadia University, Dalhousie University, Mount Saint Vincent University, Nova Scotia Agricultural College, St. Francis Xavier University, Saint Mary's University, and the University College of Cape Breton).

  Dalhousie University has created GINIus (Global Information Networking Institute University Services) to undertake collaborative and contracted-in research and development with industrial and public sector clients and partners. As a result of working with the clients and partners, students gain a more relevant education and learn the skills most valued by employers. This initiative also has a strong entrepreneurship component and provides incubator space for student-formed companies.

Who We Talked To

Over the past few years, government has been working with partners to develop a framework that addresses the needs of Nova Scotians and the economy. In 2001, an internal Task Force on Skills was established to research and develop a "skills agenda." The resulting vision set out by the task force—a world class workforce ready to meet the demands of today and the promise of tomorrow—remains unchanged.

A number of other consultation sessions and reports point to the need for immediate strategic action in the area of skills and labour force development. The review of Nova Scotia's social assistance programs and the consultations associated with the economic growth strategy, *Opportunities for Prosperity*; the Energy Strategy; the Voluntary Planning Consultations leading to *Taking Control of Our Future: Final Report of Voluntary Planning's Fiscal Management Task Force*; the Premier's Forum on Skills; the review of the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act; and the Department of Education's Construction Initiative provided further basis for targeted action.

In addition, the Nova Scotia Labour Market Development Secretariat engaged Nova Scotia's labour market partners in a comprehensive consultation process leading to the publication of *Toward an Integrated Labour Market Framework*. This document identified key elements of Nova Scotia's labour market and provided insight into the role and direction the province should take.

What We Heard

Through these consultations, Nova Scotians have made comments and recommendations about the importance of skills attainment and improvement and about the need for responsive support mechanisms and an education system that enables Nova Scotians to actively participate at home, at work, and in the community.

We heard that improving the skills of Nova Scotians is critical to our economy and society.

- A lifelong learning approach to skills development is crucial to the long-term success of the province's economy.
- There are skills shortages in key sectors.
- Skills development initiatives must be flexible in order to benefit all partners.
- Training must lead to jobs.
- We must attract and retain skilled workers, retrain and improve the skills of existing workers, and have in place an appropriate immigration policy that attracts the right talent to Nova Scotia.
- Rural Nova Scotia's development is impeded by low education levels, shortage of qualified labour, and out-migration of youth.

We heard that a responsive support system is essential to the implementation of a skills framework.

- All partners are responsible and accountable for their roles and responsibilities in the development of a skills framework.
- Business and labour are willing to take more responsibility for training by increasing their involvement and investment.
- Government must assume a leadership role in the development and implementation of a skills framework.
- Labour market programs and services that support individuals must be available to all Nova Scotians, including those who are under-represented in the workforce, unemployed, or on social assistance.
- Relevant and timely labour market information is needed to assist skills partners in planning and delivering effective programs that lead to a more dynamic and responsive system. Nova Scotia needs to systematically collect and disseminate information about labour force skill requirements and education and training opportunities throughout the province.
- The benefits of trades and apprenticeship training must be marketed to create positive images among our male and female youth, their parents, and educators.
- Long-term planning policy and program development must be forward-looking and able to respond quickly to the challenges of the changing economy.
- Nova Scotia must ensure that all of its residents have the services and support they need to access education and training opportunities and succeed in our economy.
- Policies and processes must be introduced to ensure that immigrants already landed in Nova Scotia have opportunities for credential assessment and recognition that are public and transparent.
- The Nova Scotia public must understand that immigration is a key component to our future prosperity.

We heard that all components of our education system must strive for common goals.

- Education and training must be more flexible in the delivery of training and more responsive to the needs of employers and individuals.
- Education and training should provide individuals with essential and technical skills and knowledge for work.
- We need the right mix of university and college graduates to build a balanced workforce with the skills and knowledge to respond to labour market demands.
- Training and skills development initiatives must be attached to existing provincial and interprovincial recognized certifications so workers are able to access sustained employment attachment rather than training for short-term jobs requiring limited skill sets that are not recognized by other potential employers.
- Training capacities in the Apprenticeship Program must be increased, and it must be made more accessible to those who require skills upgrading and skills enhancement opportunities.
- Young people entering the labour market must be aware of career opportunities where employment opportunities exist and have the skills and training needed to match the opportunities that exist.

- The Apprenticeship Program and other trades and technology programs must create a culture that attracts and retains women and members of under-represented groups.
- Training providers must understand the relationship between training and certification and consult regularly with regulators to ensure that participants in training are receiving credit toward certification and that training materials align with existing provincial training standards.
- Commercialization is a critical component of innovation, and this should be a focus of our post-secondary education institutions.
- The education system must provide children and youth with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully make the transition into the workforce and their communities.

Skills Nova Scotia Framework

The labour market supplies skills and knowledge to support activities that sustain the economy. Equally important, however, are the key elements that define the framework and are critical to its success. A responsive framework must balance activities that address the needs of those preparing to enter the workplace with support for those who are already in it, whether as employers or employees. The framework generates activities that support Nova Scotians preparing for, finding, and keeping employment.

Key Elements

In reviewing consultation documents and reports, six elements critical to the success of a skills framework were identified. They are full partnership, strategic co-ordination, capacity building, information, accountability, and inclusion.

Full Partnership

Full partnership among government, business and labour, educational institutions, communities, community-based organizations, and individuals is needed to optimize strategic investments in labour market development. Each of the partners has specific responsibilities.

Partnership implies specific responsibilities for the framework.

- Individuals must review and renew their own skills regularly to ensure their long-term employability.
- Business and labour must assess and articulate needs effectively and maintain a strong commitment to investing in people.
- Education and training providers must understand how skill needs are changing and be responsive to the requirements of both business and labour and individuals.
- Government must ensure that resources are used to address priority skills needs and support participation in learning for Nova Scotians.
- Communities and community-based organizations must assist in the development and promotion of Skills Nova Scotia initiatives.

One of the first activities undertaken will be to develop roles and responsibilities for each of the partners to support the Skills Nova Scotia Framework.

Strategic Co-ordination

Provincial government resources must be co-ordinated and enhanced in order to develop a comprehensive approach to labour market development. The challenge is to co-ordinate the initiatives of key departments and agencies involved with labour market activity and to create a mechanism for collaborative decision making and action. With this collaboration, the province will be able to partner effectively with the federal government, business and labour, educational institutions, communities, and other stakeholders.

Capacity Building

Skills development and delivery mechanisms must be more responsive to the requirements of employers and learners. Human and financial resources are required to address immediate and longer-term development and delivery needs through a targeted initiative approach. This approach is designed to address skill shortages by providing programs and services to support successful labour market attachment. Essential to the success of a targeted initiative approach is improved capacity of the existing education and training systems.

Information

The labour market is strengthened when decisions are based on timely and accurate information. Through the sharing of knowledge, relevant labour market planning can be achieved, and responsive policy, programs, and services can be implemented, leading to a balance between labour market supply and demand.

Accountability

Accountability must be achieved by assigning clear objectives and expected levels of performance, identifying the roles and responsibilities of each partner, balancing expectations with capacities, developing ways to measure our performance, and reporting regularly and clearly.

Inclusion

Every Nova Scotian should have access to opportunities that enable them to become actively involved in the labour market. The success of our efforts to grow the economy demands the participation by all to ensure that all Nova Scotians can fully benefit from a well functioning economy.

Guiding Principles

The Skills Nova Scotia Framework will operate under the following principles:

- We will focus on developing a flexible and adaptive workforce.
- We recognize that learning occurs at home, at work, and in the community and that Nova Scotia values lifelong learning and training opportunities that encourage social and skill development.
- We all share responsibility in training, up-skilling, and re-skilling the workforce.
- We are sensitive to the needs of rural Nova Scotia and recognize that we are stronger when we build capacity in individuals and communities throughout the province.
- We will ensure a safe and healthy labour force through legislation, regulations, policies, and standards.
- We will ensure collective action and partnerships between government, business, labour, non-government organizations, learning institutions, individuals, and communities.
- We will ensure that Skills Nova Scotia is inclusive and accessible to all Nova Scotians, including immigrants, youth, women, African Nova Scotians, Aboriginal people, and persons with disabilities or low income.

Implementation Structure

Partners' Advisory Forum

The province currently benefits from a variety of consultative boards and committees that provide advice and leadership on a number of labour market programs and initiatives. A Skills Nova Scotia Partners Forum will be created to provide advice and guidance on the development of the provincial labour force as a whole. The Partners Forum will be composed of leaders from business, labour, education, training, and community organizations who understand the broad issues facing the Nova Scotia labour market and who are willing to take an advisory role.

The Partners Forum will

- provide advice, guidance, and leadership on the trends that are driving the Nova Scotian economy and will identify strategic action that may be required to ensure that the province has the skilled labour force to meet the challenges and opportunities
- ensure that mechanisms are in place to co-ordinate communications among the range of labour market boards and agencies who provide advice and guidance to government on skills and related issues
- validate an annual action plan and year-end report

Deputy Ministers' Committee

A Deputy Ministers' Committee has been established to oversee implementation of the Skills Nova Scotia Framework. Chaired by the Department of Education, the committee will include Community Services, Environment and Labour, and the Office of Economic Development. The Deputies' Committee will meet semi-annually with the Partners Forum.

Skills Nova Scotia—Labour Force Planning Committee

A Skills Nova Scotia—Labour Force Planning Committee will be established to ensure the full operational integration of the Skills Nova Scotia Framework across government. Composed of senior officials from all departments and agencies who play an active role in labour force development, the Labour Force Planning Committee will implement an annual action plan and ensure strategic co-ordination of programs and services.

Skills and Learning Branch

A new branch, to be known as Skills and Learning, will be created within the Department of Education. The branch will consist of policy and program elements necessary to lead the province's efforts in skills and contribute to the ongoing development and implementation of the Skills Nova Scotia Framework.

The elements include

- Apprenticeship Training
- Provincial Apprenticeship Board
- Adult Literacy and Basic Education
- Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning
- High School Graduation Diploma for Adults
- Essential Skills Programming in the Workplace
- Workforce Adjustment and Attachment Initiatives
- Labour Market Information Research and Analysis
- Labour Market Policy and Research
- Targeted Skills Initiatives
- Federal/Provincial Relations—Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA), Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM)
- Skills Nova Scotia Marketing Initiatives
- Immigration Programs and Services

Intergovernmental Relations

Nova Scotia cannot build a skilled and knowledgeable labour force on its own. All orders of government must share the commitment to work together and with other partners to ensure that all Nova Scotians can achieve their learning goals.

Federal/Provincial Relations

The federal government is an important partner in the development of a skilled and adaptable workforce. Through a variety of agreements and strategies, the province is working to ensure that national, regional, and provincial goals are achieved and that Nova Scotia plays an important role in the economic growth and prosperity of Canada. Efforts to develop a national skills agenda through an Innovations Strategy and the negotiation of a new Canada–Nova Scotia Labour Market Development Agreement offer two significant opportunities to work together.

Canadian Health and Social Transfer (CHST)

The most significant increment since 1995 was in September 2000 when the federal government added $23.4 billion (over five years) to the CHST transfer. This increment was based on the proviso that the money be dedicated strictly to health expenditures. Provincial and territorial ministers of finance have called upon the federal government to increase the CHST generally to the 1995 levels.

Innovations Strategy

In the 2001 Speech from the Throne, the federal government expressed its interest in developing a skills agenda. Recently, the federal government released two consultation papers, *Achieving Excellence* and *Knowledge Matters*. Nova Scotia's response to the two documents will identify our priorities and reinforce our commitment to working with the federal government.

Canada–Nova Scotia Labour Market Development Agreement

The province has also indicated that it wishes to renegotiate its Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) to better meet the needs of Nova Scotians. The new agreement is fundamental to supporting the goals identified in the Skills Nova Scotia Framework and advancing the actions necessary to achieve our priorities.

The federal government provides the following labour market programs and services:

- supporting post-secondary students through student financial assistance measures
- funding the Canada–Nova Scotia Agreement on Strategic Partnerships
- funding assistance to provinces to enhance labour force attachment for persons with disabilities (Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities, EAPD)
- supporting the education and training pursuits of Aboriginal people
- providing labour market information
- providing short-term work experience opportunities during the summer months for students and recent graduates
- administering programs to support temporary foreign workers and permanent skilled workers to enter the country
- encouraging industrial sector councils to assess and respond to sectoral skill requirements
- conducting research into a broad range of labour market issues and compiling "best practice" documents
- providing transfers through the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) to support health, post-secondary education, and social services

Aboriginal Relations

On June 7, 2002 the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia, and Canada signed an umbrella agreement that reaffirms their longstanding relationship and commitment to work together in good faith to resolve issues of mutual concern. The agreement highlights three distinct elements of their relationship:

- formal negotiations to consider constitutionally protected rights and other related issues of Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia
- renewal of the parties' commitment to the existing Mi'kmaq–Nova Scotia–Canada Tripartite Forum
- initiation of discussions regarding the requirement of governments to consult with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia.

An important element of the umbrella agreement will be to increase the sustainability and self-reliance capacity of Mi'kmaq communities. This will require an increased emphasis by all parties on Aboriginal skills and training.

The following are some key interests and considerations:

- The Government of Canada has primary responsibility for Aboriginal education and training. Nova Scotia calls on the federal government to meet its obligations in this area.
- The province has an interest in taking a more strategic approach to Aboriginal skills development through co-ordination with the federal government and Aboriginal communities regarding federal/First Nation labour market initiatives such as the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements and provincial skills and labour market development initiatives.
- Nova Scotia currently works collaboratively with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia and the Government of Canada within the Tripartite Forum. This vehicle could be used to further collaboration in the area of skills development.
- The province will continue to participate in the Federal/Provincial/Territorial/Aboriginal Forum on Aboriginal Participation in the Economy and explore opportunities for Aboriginal skills and training development as one of the strategies to help increase Aboriginal participation in the economy.
- The Province of Nova Scotia along with the Mi'kmaq and the Government of Canada are entering into a multi-phased process with a focus on resolving treaty and related issues through negotiation. Although this process may or may not deal directly with skills and training, an inherent objective in the resolution of these issues will be an increased capacity for First Nations in Nova Scotia to participate economically.

Municipal Relations

Municipal governments have an important role to play in the development of a thriving and prosperous Nova Scotia. Municipalities are working to grow existing businesses and attract new investment, which requires access to a skilled and flexible workforce. Through the framework, all orders of government will be encouraged to work together to advance common goals.

Strategies for Action

In order to achieve the province's vision for Skills Nova Scotia, three goals have been identified:

- meet the skill needs of Nova Scotia's labour market
- provide better labour market access and supports to Nova Scotians
- strengthen Nova Scotia's system of lifelong learning opportunities

What follows are the goals, objectives, some of the highlighted activities, and new actions planned under the Skills Nova Scotia Framework. Each of the goals and objectives is supported by a rationale of what we have learned from the extensive skills related consultations and research we have undertaken. A detailed action plan is to be developed and released in the fall of 2002.

Goal 1: Meet the skill needs of Nova Scotia's labour market

The capacity to respond to emerging skills needs will be the key component to Nova Scotia's competitiveness. There are a number of objectives that will have to be met to increase the capacity of our labour force to meet the labour market needs of today and tomorrow. They include the development and dissemination of accurate labour market information, increasing our ability to respond to short-term skills shortages, improving the mobility of our workers, and attracting and retaining workers from other regions. The more adaptive, responsive, and flexible that Nova Scotia's labour force and skills development practices become, the more competitive our labour market will be.

Objective 1: Research, develop, and distribute high-quality labour market information

What we've learned

The Province of Nova Scotia does not collect the type and quality of labour market information needed to fully realize the goals of the Skills Nova Scotia Framework and is limited in the capacity to analyse existing data. The development of labour market information will provide the means by which Nova Scotians can make informed career decisions, government and industry can predict future skill demands, and education and training providers can respond to emerging labour market needs. Creating and disseminating accurate information will require the commitment and co-operation of industry, labour, government, and education and training providers.

Highlights of activities under way

- addressing the needs of stakeholders by developing and implementing a co-ordinated approach to the collect, analyse, and disseminate labour market information (this initiative is being undertaken as a federal/provincial partnership)
- understanding the human and resource planning needs of Nova Scotia's health care system by partnering with the Health Care Human Resource Sector Council and the federal government

New actions

- consult with business and labour, individuals, governments, community-based organizations, and education and training institutions to identify their labour market information needs
- research labour market issues and trends to support government labour market policy initiatives and the development of labour market programs and services for Nova Scotians
- analyse labour market issues with our partners on the business side, who are primarily interested in determining ways to identify and predict business labour needs in Nova Scotia

Objective 2: Co-ordinate targeted initiatives that meet emerging skills needs

What we've learned

Nova Scotia does not have a co-ordinated process to respond to immediate skills needs. However, some employers, unions, training providers, and government have created innovative partnerships to address short-term skills needs. Building upon the success of those partnerships, we need to create a co-ordinated and flexible approach to meet immediate needs.

Highlights of activities under way

- addressing the short- and long-term human resource issues in the construction industry, the Construction Trades Skills Initiative will ensure that Nova Scotia has the skilled workers required in the construction trades to meet the industry's current and future needs
- targeting older workers (aged 55–64) through the Older Worker Pilot Project Initiative, in partnership with the federal government, which is designed to reintegrate displaced older workers into sustainable employment or maintain employment of older workers threatened with displacement
- implementing Nova Scotia's Nursing Strategy, which includes initiatives to support ongoing education needs for practising nurses
- developing and implementing strategies for the culture sector focussed on developing export sales opportunities for cultural products in design, new media, music and sound recording, production crafts, and publishing

New actions

- address the issues of industry human resource planning and skills development by partnering with sector council and industry associations
- engage stakeholders in an Energy Sector Skills Forum as outlined in the Energy Strategy document

Objective 3: Work to enhance and improve the apprenticeship system in Nova Scotia

What we've learned

The availability of high-quality training and tradespeople is an essential part of a strategy to make Nova Scotia an attractive place for businesses to invest in and to enable Nova Scotia's businesses to be competitive in domestic and world markets. Recent public consultations have indicated the importance of continuing to promote apprenticeship and increasing the public's awareness of the benefits of careers in the trades. Nova Scotia's apprenticeship system needs to match a growing demand with skilled labour.

Highlights of activities under way

- reviewing the apprenticeship system through a consultative process
- developing occupational trades standards and associated labour mobility policies (Red Seal Program) in partnership with the other provinces and territories
- piloting an Apprenticeship Essential Skills Initiative to identify an apprentice's essential skills needs and to develop individualized learning plans

New actions

- explore a reciprocal credential recognition mechanism between the community college and apprenticeship systems

Objective 4: Improve mobility of skilled workers within Canada

What we've learned

Nova Scotia has been an active player in assisting the mobility of all Canadians. Improving mobility is one mechanism to address skills shortages. Nova Scotia will encourage stronger efforts by provincial and territorial governments, and provincial and national regulatory bodies to meet compliance requirements of the Labour Mobility Chapter of Agreement on Internal Trade.

Highlights of activities under way

- implementing the Labour Mobility Chapter of Agreement on Internal Trade to enhance the mobility of workers within Canada, which aids in workers' qualifications being recognized across provinces, making it easier for skilled workers to choose where to live and work
- enhancing the National Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program for the trades, in partnership with the private sector

New actions

- encourage stronger efforts by provincial and territorial governments and provincial and national regulatory bodies to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Labour Mobility Chapter of the Agreement on Internal Trade
- build upon the success of labour mobility by encouraging regulatory bodies to apply "mobility" principles to workers who have obtained their qualifications in other countries

Objective 5: Improve Nova Scotia's competitive edge to attract and retain highly skilled international workers

What we've learned

Immigration must play a significant role in meeting strategic economic and social goals. Meeting these goals require appropriate services and supports for the newcomer, including recognition of qualifications and efficient access to the labour market.

Highlights of activities under way

- attracting business immigrants and investors to the province through Nova Scotia's economic immigration programs
- attracting highly qualified international post-secondary education students to study in Nova Scotia through the International Marketing Program

New actions

- explore policy and program options to facilitate the recognition of credentials and skills for internationally trained immigrants in Nova Scotia
- develop a pilot project that will provide the required English as a Second Language (ESL) programs for academic purposes to immigrants who wish to make the transition into post-secondary education
- explore opportunities under the Provincial Nominee Program to address skills shortages
- enhance liaison between Apprenticeship Training and Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) to partner in the assessment of credentials for immigrants and to provide service delivery from both organizations that will benefit mutual clients
- research new collaborative mechanisms for considering assessment of post-secondary credentials in universities, community colleges, and private career colleges
- explore methods to retain a greater proportion of those international students studying at Nova Scotia's post-secondary institutions

Objective 6: Design and implement labour policy to promote safe and healthy work environments, fair employment standards, and stable labour-management relations

What we've learned

The work environment is significantly affected by governments labour policy, which influences workplace factors including innovation, productivity, skills development, training, health, and equity issues. Regulatory bodies responsible for labour policy have a direct role to play in contributing to a positive labour climate.

Highlights of activities under way

- consulting stakeholders and the public to achieve best practices in regulatory management to ensure a fair and safe workplace

New actions

- review the Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code
- develop a risk-based model for monitoring and compliance services in the public safety and occupational health and safety areas

Goal 2: Provide better labour market access and supports to Nova Scotians

For Skills Nova Scotia to be successful, it is necessary for the province to co-ordinate programs and services to support Nova Scotians in their career and employment choices. This includes career and employment guidance counselling, access to education and training, and the promotion of the principles of fairness, equity, and diversity.

Objective 1: Provide career- and employment-related services to Nova Scotians to help them develop their skills and find sustainable jobs

What we've learned

Many Nova Scotians need support to successfully make career and employment decisions. Existing services must be better co-ordinated across the province to ensure a continuum of career and employment supports. It is necessary to ensure equity of service for disadvantaged groups who consistently experience high levels of unemployment.

Highlights of activities under way

- offering career and job development services to income assistance recipients who are assessed as having the ability to participate in employability activity
- creating regional professional development strategies to ensure that proper student assessment and referral practices are in place to enable adults to acquire the skills and credentials they need through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning
- providing professional development for service providers, referral agencies, and career and employment counsellors concerning educational programs and credentials available to adults who have not completed high school
- supporting the creation of short-term workforce adjustment centres, in partnership with the federal government, to provide career and employment services to workers who have been laid off when a business has closed (for example, Devco, Volvo and Sydney Steel)

New actions

- initiate a service mapping project leading to a co-ordinated strategy

Objective 2: Assist low-income Nova Scotians, including income assistance recipients, to access education and training

What we've learned

A number of Nova Scotians have not completed basic education or participated in skills training. Many of these individuals are in low-paying jobs or rely on income assistance to meet all or part of their income needs. We recognize that access to education and training is essential to acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to achieve individual goals at home, at work, and in the community.

Highlights of activities under way

- developing work transition programs in areas of labour market demand and ensuring that there is a match between skills required and the needs of industry (for example, income assistance recipients who successfully completed essential skills education programs in the hotel industry are gaining employment in entry-level positions)
- providing eligible recipients of income assistance with sponsorship, in the form of full tuition, books, and fees, to attend one- and two-year core programs at the Nova Scotia Community College in order to gain the educational and technical skills necessary to enter the competitive labour market through the Equity Opportunities Program

New actions

- exploring options for a new debt reduction program that will reduce student loan debt for students with the highest need (the details of this new program will be released over the next 12 months)

Objective 3: Promote equity, fairness, and diversity throughout labour market programs and services offered in Nova Scotia

What we've learned

Individuals who have significant barriers to employment often require additional support in order to make the transition to work. We need to enhance the contributions of all Nova Scotians to seize emerging economic opportunities through the Skills Nova Scotia Framework. A comprehensive plan is required to address disadvantaged groups in achieving fair and equitable access.

Highlights of activities under way

- developing and implementing a recruitment initiative targeted at students in the public education system with disabilities to improve access to the Nova Scotia Community College
- providing an Education Incentive Program for African Nova Scotian Students to assist and encourage their continued participation in high schools, community colleges, technical institutes, universities, and other approved post-secondary institutions
- enabling representatives of both federal and provincial governments and community organizations to work together to identify barriers to employment for women and opportunities for inclusion of low-income women in labour market programs and services offered in Nova Scotia

New actions

- extend the Memorandum of Understanding framework between the Nova Scotia Community College and regional school boards to First Nations' schools to support student success in post-secondary education

Objective 4: Develop and implement prior-learning assessment and recognition processes and tools

What we've learned

The recognition of prior learning is fundamental to the development of a lifelong learning culture. Only through the recognition of the activities in the home, community, and workplace will such a culture be developed. Prior-learning assessment and recognition processes need to be developed to provide opportunities for people to receive credentials for skills and knowledge they already possess.

Highlights of activities under way

- recognizing work experiences and technical training for the purpose of determining eligibility to write the trade certification exam
- supporting the development of additional articulation agreements between post-secondary institutions whereby credits earned at one institution are recognized by another
- implementing program policies through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning that recognize prior learning to fulfil some of the requirements of the Nova Scotia High School Diploma for Adults

New actions

- develop a credential recognition service to assess formal education of individuals educated in other countries who seek access to Nova Scotian post-secondary institutions or the labour market

Goal 3: Strengthen Nova Scotia's system of lifelong learning opportunities

The continued development of a skilled and knowledgeable labour force will require the nuturing of a lifelong learning culture in Nova Scotia. In order to survive and thrive in the new global economy, Nova Scotians must adopt an attitude that learning is a lifelong endeavour that starts with birth and continues into adulthood. Encouraging positive attitudes towards learning will ensure the growth of a skilled and knowledgeable labour force.

Objective 1: Increase the opportunities for Nova Scotia's children to develop a curiosity for and ability to learn prior to entering Nova Scotia's education system.

What we've learned

Children who enter school ready to learn are more likely to be successful in school. Parents and other caregivers need to be equipped with the knowledge required to foster our children's learning ability and curiosity. Activities that support children's development now will better prepare them to succeed in the future.

Highlights of activities under way

- supporting Read to Me!, a province-wide initiative to give every newborn in the province a gift bag containing educational resources for the parents as well as age and culturally appropriate books to support parents and caregivers as their children's first and most important teachers
- supporting the Family Literacy Initiative Endowment Fund, which provides grants to non-profit organizations to carry out family literacy projects in the province

- developing a comprehensive system of Early Childhood Development (ECD) in partnership with the federal government, which includes enhanced home visiting, quality child care, supports for children with special needs, parent education and support, and a variety of training strategies

New actions

- create a provincial working group to develop an action plan, as well as good practice guidelines, to support family literacy in Nova Scotia

Objective 2: Improve the core skills of children in Nova Scotia's Education System.

What we've learned

Recent test scores indicate that students in Nova Scotia's education system are performing at lower levels than students in other parts of the country. These core skills are the foundation on which their future labour market success will be built. Improving literacy, math, and science skills and knowledge will better prepare students for post-secondary education and training and/or employment.

Highlights of activities under way

- supporting Writers in Action, an initiative that aims at improving grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation
- implementing Active Young Readers, an initiative that provides resources for teachers and ongoing professional development for teachers regarding explicit reading instruction, as well as increasing support for children in Reading Recovery
- developing resources designed to enhance the French language skills of children enrolled in the Acadian Education System who may have limited exposure to French at home
- supporting Techsploration, which introduces junior high school girls to scientific, technical and trades work

New actions

- implement a comprehensive math strategy that will provide mathematics teacher leaders in every school; increase opportunities for teacher training/professional development; provide resources for teachers, students, and parents; establish minimum time requirements for mathematics instruction in grades primary to 12; and provide a framework for increased accountability for student learning and achievement
- implement Active Readers 7–9, an initiative that will provide student resources, teacher resources, and professional development for reading instruction and effective interventions for struggling readers
- complete the implementation of new Atlantic Canada Science Curriculum for grades P-12, including the provision of equipment and other resources required for hands-on science learning.
- launch French first language resources for teachers and parents

Objective 3: Expand co-operative and work experience opportunities for students in Nova Scotia's Secondary Education System

What we've learned

Industry stakeholders have expressed that there is a need to better prepare Nova Scotia's secondary school students with skills and knowledge that will be relevant in tomorrow's labour market. Co-operative and work experience opportunities provide students with a chance to develop the skills and knowledge and gain the insights needed to help them make future career decisions.

Highlights of activities under way

- encouraging young people to consider entrepreneurship as a viable employment opportunity through the Youth Entrepreneurship Scholarships (YES) Program
- providing significant opportunities under the Community Access Program for students to access entry-level work place opportunities throughout Nova Scotia

New actions

- work with partners to identify resources that will allow the expansion of co-operative education and other community-based education programs to provide more high school students with experience in the workplace
- work with education, industry, business, and sector councils to establish, pilot, and implement a youth apprenticeship program that will include non-traditional occupations as well as trades and technology
- develop, pilot, and implement new courses that focus on labour market needs and opportunities, including interactive technology courses

Objective 4: Increase the opportunities for Nova Scotians to gain access to adult basic education

What we've learned

More than half of Canada's workforce of 2015 is already in the labour market. All Nova Scotians must be able to access education and training in order to join the ranks of a skilled and knowledgeable labour force. The growth of a skilled and knowledgeable labour force will require activities that provide working-age Nova Scotians with opportunities to access upgrade education and training.

Highlights of activities under way

- ensuring that a continuum of programs for adults ranging from basic literacy to the High School Graduation Diploma for Adults is available through the Nova Scotia School of Adult Learning
- delivering short-term programs to help Nova Scotians to enhance their basic skills (for example, the Woodlot Management Home Study Program provides woodlot owners with easy-to-understand materials that will help them better manage their woodlots)

New actions

- implement a pilot literacy project to improve educational services for adults who are incarcerated or in conflict with the law
- develop resources to assist adult literacy organizations in serving the needs of seniors

Objective 5: Make education and training more relevant to the emerging skill needs of learners and employers

What we've learned

Globalization, technology, new management methods, and information are rapidly changing the skill and knowledge requirements of world of work. Traditional jobs are being constantly transformed, and new professions with new combinations of skills are rapidly emerging. A more flexible education and training system will provide curriculum to respond to emerging skill needs.

Highlights of activities under way

- partnering with employers and labour through the Workplace Education Initiative to develop customized essential skills programs for workers
- establishing the Energy Training Program for Students to encourage the private sector to hire post-secondary students for summer and co-op work terms in the energy sector
- implementing the Nova Scotia Nursing Strategy, which provides funding for a co-operative learning experience for student nurses in the Dalhousie and St. Francis Xavier nursing programs

New actions

- enhance the Nova Scotia Community College's capacity to have industry assist in program and curriculum development

Objective 6: Increase the capacity of the post-secondary education and training system to respond to emerging labour market needs

What we've learned

Skills shortages are being reported in the construction and health sectors and are predicted in the education and management professions. The creation of a skilled labour force positioned to satisfy the emerging skills shortages will require a more adaptive, responsive, and flexible education and training system. Collaboration among industry, government, education, and training providers will be a key component to Nova Scotia's success in responding to emerging labour market needs.

Highlights of activities under way

- exploring the growth capacity of the Nova Scotia Community College
- providing network linkages to enhance the foundations of the digital economy and knowledge economy through the Information Economy Initiative, which includes providing enhanced high-speed access to university and community college sites
- expanding the baccalaureate nursing programs in Nova Scotia

New actions

- increase the capacity of the Apprenticeship Training Division to fund apprenticeship training and development and revision of apprenticeship standards
- integrate programming through the merger of Université Sainte-Anne and Collège de l'Acadie to provide increased opportunities for French post-secondary education

Objective 7: Promote lifelong learning through the development of a learning culture

What we've learned

Change in the 21st century is occurring more rapidly and frequently than ever before. Encouraging lifelong learning will help Nova Scotians to effectively participate at home, at work, and in the community.

Highlights of activities under way

- mobilizing a wide range of partners to launch International Adult Learners' Week in Nova Scotia to celebrate adult learning and encourage participation in all forms of adult learning opportunities.

New actions

- encourage an interest in biology, archaeology, geology, palaeontology, culture, and heritage by providing a comprehensive schedule of Nova Scotia–specific exhibits and interpretive programs through the Nova Scotia Museum
- increase accessibility of provincial and community heritage resources and genealogy information available on line through the Nova Scotia Museum and Public Archives to promote educational resources and opportunities for Nova Scotians
- promote the Nova Scotia Skills Framework and its components
- conduct public information sessions and presentations to encourage business and labour to invest in adult learning and skills training of their workforce
- showcase community and industry leadership through the provision of recognition events and awards

Skills Nova Scotia—Next Steps

The Skills Nova Scotia Framework lays the foundation for the skills, supports, and systems necessary to achieve a world-class workforce ready to meet the challenges of today and the promise of tomorrow. This vision can be achieved only through the hard work and co-operation of all partners. Fortunately, Nova Scotians are adaptable and resourceful people, ready to meet the challenges of the rapidly changing economy.

The framework responds to both the short- and long-term nature of the work that needs to be done. Without delay, we must develop means to respond to economic opportunities as they arise, with skilled workers and the innovative thinking that will ensure a vibrant and strong Nova Scotia. Over the long term, we must ensure that our children arrive at the beginning of their education years with the foundations for learning firmly in place; our education systems must produce graduates with the tools necessary for today's workforce; and we must provide opportunities to learn across the life span, recognizing that learning isn't something you complete, but a way that you live.

With this framework designed, we need to build the strategies that will bring it to life. The key to success will be the partnerships that are forged to support the action that is envisioned. Over the next few months, Nova Scotians will have the opportunity to respond to the framework, confirm the vision and goals, and identify ways to move forward. We all have a role to play. Together, we will build a strong workforce for a bright future.

Milestones

Establish Skills and Learning Branch—July 2002

Initiate process to recruit Senior Executive Director, Skills and Learning Branch—July 2002

Post draft framework to Web site—July 2002

Gather feedback on framework—July–September 2002

Release Skills Nova Scotia Framework with 2002–03 Action Plan—October 2002

Release First Annual Skills Nova Scotia Report Card—March 2003

Release 2003–04 Skills Nova Scotia Action Plan—March 2003

Strategies for Action

Goal 1: Meet the skill needs of Nova Scotia's labour market

Objective 1: Research, develop, and distribute high-quality labour market information

Objective 2: Co-ordinate targeted initiatives that meet emerging skills needs

Objective 3: Work to enhance and improve the apprenticeship system in Nova Scotia

Objective 4:Improve mobility of skilled workers within Canada

Objective 5: Improve Nova Scotia's competitive edge in attracting and retaining highly skilled international workers

Objective 6: Design and implement labour policy to promote safe and healthy work environments, fair employment standards, and stable labour-management relations

Goal 2: Provide better labour market access and supports to Nova Scotians

Objective 1: Provide career- and employment-related services to Nova Scotians to help them develop their skills and find sustainable jobs

Objective 2: Assist low-income Nova Scotians, including income assistance recipients, to access education and training

Objective 3: Promote equity, fairness, and diversity throughout labour market programs and services offered in Nova Scotia

Objective 4: Develop and implement prior-learning assessment and recognition processes and tools

Goal 3: Strengthen Nova Scotia's system of lifelong learning opportunities

Objective 1: Increase the opportunities for Nova Scotia's children to develop a curiosity for and ability to learn prior to entering Nova Scotia's education system

Objective 2: Improve the core skills of children in Nova Scotia's education system

Objective 3: Expand co-operative and work experience opportunities for students in Nova Scotia's secondary education system

Objective 4: Increase the opportunities for Nova Scotians to access adult basic education

Objective 5: Make education and training more relevant to the emerging skill needs of learners and employers

Objective 6: Increase the capacity of the post-secondary education and training system to respond to emerging labour market needs

Objective 7: Promote lifelong learning through the development of a learning culture